by way of removal of those defects, replacement of goods and by way of compensation. The question of prosecution or punishment arises only if these orders are not complied with.

1830. [*Transferred to 18th March* 1994.]

Amendments in the Consumer Protection Act and Standard of Weight and Measures Rule 1977.

1831. PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA : Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state :

(a) whether his Ministry was considering to bring about amendments in the Consumers Protection Act and Standards of Weights and Measures (Packaged Commodities) Rule 1977 to safeguard the interests of the consumers; and

(b) if so, the action taken therein so far with details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) (1) The Consumer Protection Act, 1986 was amended on 27-8-93 with a view to enlarging the scope of the Act by including complaints relating to the following for seeking redressal :

(i) restrictive trade practices ;

(ii) goods purchased for self employment;

(iii) goods which are hazardous to life and safety. Further, services relating to "housing construction" have been included in the definition of "services" in the wider interest of the consumers.

(2) The Standards of Weights and Measures (Packaged Commodities) Rules was amended on 26-8-1993 withdrawing the provision on fixing of additional labels on packages. This has been done to prevent exploitation of the consumers by the trade by resorting to fixing price stickers with an enhanced price over and above the sale price declared by the manufacturers.

Plight of Vanaspati Industries in the country

1832. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA : Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are aware of the plight of the Vanaspati industry in the country with a number of factories having been closed and majority of the remaining units working around 40 per cent of their capacity;

(b) if so, what exercise has been made by Government to identify the cause for growing sickness in the Vanaspati industry in the country; and

(c) what measures are contemplated by Government to revive the closed units and to make the Vanaspati Industry economically viable ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED) : (a) Around 27 per cent of the vanaspati units are at present lying closed.

Overall capacity utilisation of the vanaspati units currently is around 44 per cent.

(b) Some of the causes identified for growing sickness in the vanaspati industry in the country are the disparity in the tax structure between new and existing vanaspati units in certain States, as also between vanaspati and refined oils comparatively reduced availability of raw materials, consumers' preference for refined oils in relation to vanaspati, obsolete nature of the plants and equipment, etc.

(c) Some of the measures taken by the Government to improve the situation are fiscal incentives for use of certain specified oils in the manufacture of vanaspati, reduction in the excise duty on vanaspati by Rs. 400 per M. T. in 1993-94 budget, concessional rate of custom duty on certain

equipment considered necessary for modernisation and cost reduction, etc.

Role of N. G. Os. in protecting the consumers

1833. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO : Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government propose to encourage non-Governmental organisations to take a more prominent role in protecting the consumers;

(b) if so, the details of such efforts;

(c) whether N.G.Os. will be encouraged to play a more active role in Andhra Pradesh; and

(d) if so, the details thereof

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED) : (a) to (d) Government has taken a number of measures to encourage non-governmental organisations to play an effective role in protecting the consumers. These measures include amendment of various legislations such as prevention of Food Adulteration Act, etc., to empower registered consumer organisations to file complaints in the courts; grant of financial assistance; giving representation to non-governmental organisations on various Councils/Committees constituted to protect the interests of consumtrs institution of National awards for consumer organisation; prtnting of literature and its free distribution; publishing of quarterly journal "Upbhokta Jagaran" and its free distribution to consumer organisations; conducting of training programmes etc. These measures apply to non governmental organisations working in Andhra Pradesh also.

Expansion of PDS to Urban areas

1834. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state;

(a) whether Government propose to consider the expansion of the Public Distribution System to the poor living in the urban areas;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) steps taken to implement the new schemes in the urban areas for the poorer sections ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED) : (a) to (c) As per the present policy of the Central Government, coverage under the Public Distribution System (PDS) is universal in nature. All persons, including the poor living in the Urban areas are entitled to the benefits of the PDS. The Advisory Council on PDS had set up a Committee of Ministers from State Governments in Marrh, 1993, to formulate recommendations regarding a National Policy on PDS focussing on the need to allocate larger and more meaningful quantities to the really needy and deserving sections of society. The recommendations made by Committee of Ministers included a suggestion that at least 20 kgs. of foodgrains per family per month shoulid be made available to every family of the vulnerable population. The report of the Committee of Minister was considered by the Advisory Council on PDS in its meettng held in September, 1993. The Advisory Council on PDS was of the opinion that the matter required further consultation with State Governments through the forum of the National Development Council. Government has so far not taken any decision in the matter.

1835. [*Transferred to 16th March*, 1994.]

Probing the authenticity of claims by consumers in respect of consumer Products.

1836. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL : Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government propose to take initiative in the interest of the consumers to probe into the authenticity of